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Fifty-second session
Item 12 of the preliminary list*

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

United Nations Population Award

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on the United Nations Population Award, established by the Assembly in its resolution 36/201 of 17 December 1981. The report, which covers 1997, was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1982/112 of 26 April 1982.

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Report on the 1997 United Nations Population Award

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 17 December 1981, the General Assembly adopted resolution 36/201, entitled "Establishment of the United Nations Population Award". The Award is presented annually to an individual or individuals, to an institution or institutions or to any combination thereof for the most outstanding contribution to increasing awareness of population questions or to finding solutions to them.

2. The laureate(s) is selected by the Committee for the United Nations Population Award, which is composed of representatives of 10 Member States of the United Nations elected by the Economic and Social Council for a period of three years.

3. In 1994, the Economic and Social Council selected the following countries to serve on the Committee for the three-year period beginning on 1 January 1995: Belarus, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo (the former Zaire), El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Japan, Netherlands and Philippines. The Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) serve as ex officio members. The Executive Director also acts as Secretary of the Committee. The Award consists of a diploma, a gold medal and a monetary prize.

4. On 5 December 1986, by its decision 41/445, the General Assembly amended article 2, paragraph 1, of the annex to resolution 36/201 so that an individual and an institution could share the Award.

5. On 26 May 1987, by its decision 1987/129, the Economic and Social Council amended the rules of procedure of the Committee for the Population Award accordingly.

6. In January 1997, the Committee elected Mr. Julio Armando Martini Herrera (Guatemala) as Chairman.

7. The following five eminent individuals served as honorary members in an advisory capacity to the Committee: Ms. Robin Chandler Duke, Chairperson, Population Action International; Mr. Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, former President of Mexico; Mr. Dirk van der Kaa of the Netherlands; Ms. Shidzue Kato of Japan; and Ms. Victoria Sekitoleko, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of Uganda.

II. THE 1997 UNITED NATIONS POPULATION AWARD

8. A total of 22 nominations were received for the 1997 United Nations Population Award from qualified nominators. Within the mandate given to them by the General Assembly, the Committee showed innovation in the process of selection of the candidates by choosing three laureates instead of the traditional two, and all in the individual category.

9. After a thorough review of the nominations, and taking into account the views offered by the honorary members, the Committee selected Ms. Elizabeth Aguirre de Calderón Sol, Director, National Family Secretariat, El Salvador; Dr. Toshio Kuroda, Director Emeritus, Nihon University Population Research Institute, Tokyo; and Senator Mechai Viravaidya, Director, Population and Community Development Association, Thailand as the 1997 laureates.

10. Ms. Elizabeth Aguirre de Calderón Sol was nominated for her work in promoting social development when she was President of the Brigade for Social Development in 1989 and for her more recent work directing the National Family Secretariat of El Salvador. She also led El Salvador's delegation to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, as well as her country's delegation to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

11. Dr. Toshio Kuroda was selected for his contribution of more than 50 years of scientific studies, writing, teaching, technical assistance and leadership in population issues in Japan, Asia and throughout the world. Dr. Kuroda began his career in 1947 at the Institute of Population Problems in the Japanese Ministry of Health and eventually became the Institute's Director. He was also Director-General of Nihon University's well-known Population Research Institute. He has served as Japan's delegate to sessions of the United Nations Commission on Population and to various international conferences. Dr. Kuroda's research covers the full range of population issues, with specially noted work in the areas of fertility, family organization, migration and urban affairs.

12. Senator Mechai Viravaidya was nominated for his energetic and innovative work promoting population policy in Thailand and throughout Asia, and for his promotion of family planning services. Senator Mechai is one of the most well-known names in Asian family planning. In 1974, he created a private association, the Population and Community Development Association, which pioneered activities such as village-based family planning programmes at a time when the strategy was still new. His creative strategies for linking population and development have been central to bringing Thai fertility to below replacement level in a thoroughly voluntary programme. Senator Mechai was among the first leaders to acknowledge Thailand's growing problem with HIV/AIDS and he has worked to frame an effective national policy for AIDS prevention in response.

III. FINANCIAL MATTERS

13. As at 1 January 1996, the Trust Fund had a total of $737,739. Income from interest was $49,802. Expenditures in 1996, including the prizes, totalled $47,417. The closing balance as at 31 December 1996 totalled $740,124.

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CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

Letter dated 26 June 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to item 80 of the preliminary list and to transmit herewith a report entitled "Technical considerations: regarding the statements by the United States Department of State on the activities of the United States S2R aircraft while overflying Cuban national territory on 21 October 1996".

This report refers to the appearance in Cuba of a plague of Thrips palmi, in connection with which a document of the General Assembly (A/52/128), dated 29 April 1997, has been circulated.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and the report annexed hereto circulated to Member States as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Bruno RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Cuba

* A/52/50.

ANNEX

Technical considerations regarding the statements by the United States Department of State on the activities of the United States S2R aircraft while overflying Cuban national territory on 21 October 1996

On 5 May 1997 the Secretary-General of the United Nations distributed as a General Assembly document (A/52/128, dated 29 April 1997) a report on the appearance in Cuba of a plague of Thrips palmi. The report gives a thorough description of the facts of the overflight along the "Girón" corridor, within Cuban national territory, by the S2R aircraft, registration No. N3093M on the United States Civil Aircraft Register, operated by the State Department. The findings of the investigation carried out, as concluded in the above report, relate, with a high degree of certainty, the appearance of Thrips palmi in Cuba with the discharge of unknown substances over Cuban territory by the United States aircraft.

On 6 May the United States Department of State issued statements on the report submitted by Cuba. In those statements, in an attempt to justify the spraying of substances over Cuba, it was indicated that the pilot followed prudent air safety measures by marking his location with smoke and that all small aircraft of this type used by the United States are equipped with smoke generator systems. It was also stated that during long flights the sprinkler systems are not operational because the tanks normally used for pesticides are used to store the fuel needed for the flight. Such arguments are insubstantial and unprofessional, as unquestionably evidenced by the following technical considerations.

Questions relating to the use of the smoke generator as an air transit procedure

The norms and regulations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) do not make any reference whatsoever to any regulation establishing the use of smoke generators to signal the position of aircraft in flight and it is not a known practice.

This aircraft was flying under an IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) flight plan, where responsibility for the separation of aircraft during flight is assumed by the air traffic controller guiding the aircraft, and not by the pilots, as the United States smoke generator version claims.

It is absurd to claim that the pilot was unsettled to such an extent by the approach of a Cubana de Aviación aircraft that he decided to activate the so-called smoke generator without ever reporting this to the air traffic controller who was guiding him and who was responsible for his separation, this being the standard procedure.

It is also significant that the approach supposedly made him turn on the so-called smoke generator and that there was no report of this by the aircraft captain on arriving at his destination, which is certainly also a standard procedure.

Nor did the pilot report in flight that he had any technical problem on board.

Cuba has recordings of the exchange by radio between the aircraft and the air traffic controller.

On the use of the smoke generator

In the official publications consulted (inter alia, Jane's All The World's Aircraft 1992-1993, Aviation Week & Space Technology, of 16 March 1992), the smoke generator does not appear as standard equipment on S2R-T65 aircraft.

Small, medium and large commercial aircraft, general aviation aircraft, and crop duster planes manufactured and operated all over the world are not equipped with smoke generators and such devices are not required by ICAO.

The only normal practice is the installation of smoke generators in aerobatic aircraft for display flights and other related activities.

On the use of the herbicide tank for carrying fuel

It is well known that this kind of aircraft, as well as other similar ones, can use the tank normally used for carrying herbicides or other substances as a fuel tank on long flights. In the case of the N3093M flight on 21 October 1996 there are factors that show that the herbicide tank was not used to carry fuel. These can be summarized as follows.

The flight request submitted to the relevant Cuban authorities states that it was a ferry flight, which, in aeronautical phraseology, means that this aircraft was carrying no payload, i.e. that the herbicide tank was empty, since it is the only compartment where this aircraft carries any payload.

This aircraft has fuel tanks with a useable capacity of 228 gallons (863 litres), which allows it to fly for approximately six and a half hours, covering an approximate distance of 1,300 km, depending on wind direction and strength. That day, according to weather reports, winds were favourable.

From take-off to the moment it left the Havana Flight Information Region (FIR) via the Atuvi checkpoint, the aircraft flew for five and a quarter hours, with a further 15 minutes to go from Atuvi to Grand Cayman, for a total of five and a half hours for 1,100 km (600 nautical miles).

From the above data it is apparent that the aircraft could have flown as planned from Cocoa Beach to Grand Cayman on the fuel in its main tanks, without using the herbicide tank for fuel.

Even if it is accepted that the herbicide tank was used for fuel, it would be absurd to accept that it was filled to capacity. This tank has an approximate capacity of 1,900 litres (500 gallons), almost twice that of the aircraft's fuel tanks.

To have filled this tank with fuel not needed for the flight would have entailed additicnal weight with a resulting increase in fuel consumption.

If, notwithstanding all this logical reasoning, it was decided to fill the herbicide tank with fuel for the flight, it is doubtful that it was filled with more than 100 gallons. Technically, it is possible to prepare the tank to fill part of it with fuel and the rest with some other substance, thus allowing for an initial consumption of fuel, and then the use of the substance to be sprayed or dusted.

The above technical considerations show how insubstantial the State Department statements have been. All of this goes to show that the United States Government has no other justification for the discharge of unknown substances over Cuban territory.

Cuba reiterates once again its concern at the use of this authorized overflight of Cuban national territory by a United States aircraft for activities that run counter to and violate, inter alia, the provisions of the Convention on Biological Weapons and the Chicago Convention and their annexed documents for the purpose of causing damage to the agriculture and population of Cuba.